



Steady Growth and Improvement

Seventh-day Adventist education in the South Pacific Division (SPD) continues to grow steadily in numbers and quality, enjoying a reputation of spiritual growth and strong academic performance. SPD is comprised of Australian Union Conference (AUC), New Zealand Union Conference (NZUC), Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM), and the Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM), which serves Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Niue, and Tuvalu. During this quinquennium, the total enrollments have grown from 54,724 to 69,194.

Tertiary Education

Six SPD tertiary entities have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in an effort to achieve greater cooperation and collaboration. Initial meetings have shown the administrators' willing-

ness to assist one another by sharing resources and increasing the opportunities for research.

Our tertiary-level schools have seen increased enrollment and growth:

- While Avondale College of Higher Education (Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia) progresses toward university status, the “Avondale experience”—fellowship, connections, shared Christian experiences and comparatively smaller classes—continues to involve high levels of service, both local and international.

- Pacific Adventist University in Papua New Guinea, which now includes the campuses of Sonoma College on the island of New Britain and the Atoifi School of Nursing in the Solomon Islands, has so many applicants that although it now requires full payment of fees on registration day, many hundreds of prospective students still have to be turned away each year.

- Fulton College moved to a new location. General Conference President

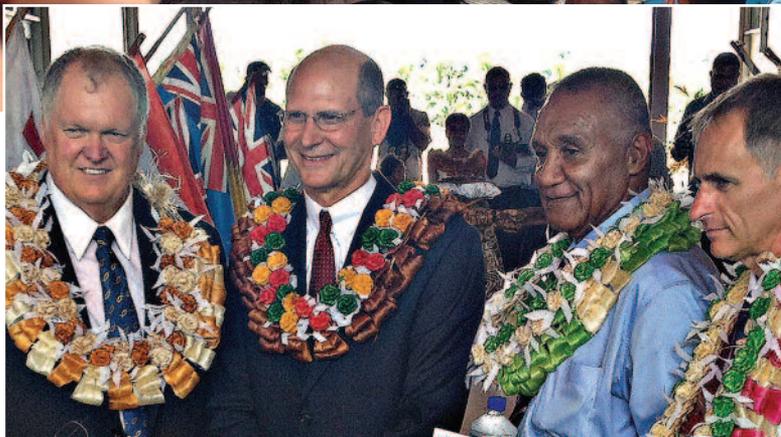
Ted N. C. Wilson attended its inauguration at the new site in February 2014. Administrators had expected that enrollment would drop due to the relocation; instead, enrollment increased to a record level.

- Mamarapha College in West Australia, which provides excellent quality education to the First Australian communities across the country and the Torres Strait Islanders in North East Australia, also reports record enrollments.

Elementary and Secondary Education

Papua New Guinea Union Mission schools continue to enjoy a reputation for offering a warm and caring classroom environment and above-average academic results in the government exams. As a result, a number of government leaders have offered the church an invitation to run specific government schools. Unfortunately, not all of

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Top: Avondale College of Higher Education students (Cooanbong, New South Wales, Australia) involved in an evangelistic service project in Malaysia. **Bottom, left to right:** Barry Oliver, South Pacific Division president; Ted Wilson, General Conference president; Vuniwa Waisea, past president, Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM); and Glen Townsend, current TPUM president, at the opening of the new Fulton College.

oratories, canteens, and general-purpose classrooms. With the use of volunteer labor and the careful spending of these grants, AUC was able to erect many excellent facilities and empower many schools to achieve their long-term plans in a vastly shorter-than-expected timeframe.

The *Encounter* Adventist Curriculum Project has been completed. This was initiated as a result of urgent calls from schools for a more relevant Bible curriculum to address the changing school demographic and the rapidly shifting social context of young people's lives. Adventist Schools Australia and the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference collaborated to develop this valuable teaching resource, which is being used to lead young people to a greater knowledge of the Scriptures and of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Teachers in the British Union Conference are also using the curriculum, and it is being piloted in the North American Division.

The AUC has conducted regular accreditation of Adventist schools for many years now, but recently has devel-

these requests can be accepted due to shortage of staff.

Committed staff members dedicate themselves to caring for the spiritual needs of students. Allen Vavuso, who left school after grade 4 and now serves as a cook for the Jones Adventist College in the Western Solomons, conducts regular Bible study sessions for interested students. In the past five years, he has been responsible for more than 500 student baptisms. Vavuso is

just one example of many staff members who go beyond the call of duty to ensure that students are led to Christ.

The Australian Union Conference (AUC) undertook four significant initiatives in 2014. With the onset of the Global Financial Crisis, the Australian Federal Government's stimulus package resulted in AU\$65 million in grants being allocated for the building of community halls, libraries, science lab-

oped a new approach to move the focus away from external sources to internal review. The *Quality Adventist Schools Improvement Framework* evaluates these areas: Adventist identity, learning and teaching, school improvement strategies, and community and partnerships.

In this process, all AUC schools are required to engage in professional conversations as they collect data, and to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their current practices in relation to each component. Such conversations lead to ownership and consensus about appropriate strategies to improve current practice. Because the strategies were developed by each school and its community, they are leading to more sustained improvement.

A new Student Management and Learning System has also been developed. Its goals are to fully engage students in their learning, and to provide parents with real-time information regarding their child's progress. Eventually, this system will facilitate the sharing of learning resources throughout the Adventist Schools Australia network.

The Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) spans a significant expanse of ocean with many island nations dotted throughout. Despite the significant challenges with transport, communication, and navigating seven different education systems, positive initiatives have been achieved. Several groups from TPUM have traveled to Australia and New Zealand to observe how these schools demonstrate special character or ethos and classroom management. In spite of the cost, this has resulted in significant development of local classroom practice. The knowledge gained from these observations has proved very valuable, not only to the participants, but also to other teachers with whom it was shared.

Challenges

Division wide, Adventist education is experiencing a number of challenges.



Top: Joe Ponduk, PNGUM director of education (extreme right); Parliament member Honorable Richard Maru, standing next to him, and other dignitaries at the groundbreaking ceremony for a school to be built by the government and run by the Adventist Church.

Middle: An example of the buildings constructed by the Adventist schools in Australia from government grants.

Bottom: A line-up of some of the teaching resources developed for the Adventist *En-counter* Bible Curriculum Project.

As the system expands, it is becoming more difficult to staff some of our schools with Adventist teachers. However, Adventist Schools Australia has baptized 16 non-Adventist teachers in the past quinquennium.

Maintaining a strong Adventist ethos and ensuring that staff members understand and commit to the Adventist worldview is also a challenge. In the upcoming quinquennium, we will continue to engage educators within the Adventist Schools Australia network in conversations about the Adventist worldview and philosophy of education through conferences and in-service activities.

While climate change is a matter of discussion internationally, many Pacific Island states are already affected. One school on the Sepik River delta in Papua New Guinea has had to relocate inland 3 kilometers due to rising ocean levels. Kauma School, on Abemama Island in Kiribati, is facing a similar fate, as the highest point on the island is just 1 meter above sea level.

The Pacific nations are experiencing considerable population growth. In the Solomon Islands, for example, population is predicted to increase by two to three percent over the next 25 years. Already, this represents the birth of a new classroom of 50 students each day. Providing the necessary infrastructure to meet this challenge is nearly impossible. Classes of 80 students per classroom are commonplace throughout the region. To meet the demand for new teachers, the division is making plans to develop a local teacher-training program that will initially lead to a diploma in teaching.

Plans for 2015-2020

The SPD theme for the next quinquennium is “Empowering Authentic Adventist Education,” which will include five main objectives:

- *Adventist Worldview and Philosophy.* Reaffirming the Adventist worldview and philosophy of education, which will be achieved via conferences

and in-service activities.

- *Christ-centered Learning and Teaching.* Improved academic performance, which will be implemented through the use of unique strategies in each union and will also incorporate whole-system programs, introduction of online learning and formal reading programs for adults, as well as the sharing of learning resources.

- *Community and Partnerships.* This has just begun with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), but it will also receive additional attention as SPD seeks to create a more vibrant and strengthened tertiary sector.

It will also include the introduction of the Faith Shaper resource aimed at reversing the heavy loss of young people from the church by working with the homes, schools, and churches.

- *Leading School Improvement.* The division’s structure and many of its policies are linked to a time when “one size fitted all.” With the academic landscape changing rapidly, our structures, accountability processes, and policies need to keep pace.

- *Completion of the Pacific Secondary Bible Curriculum Revision.* This ongoing project will be brought to completion during the next quinquennium. ✍



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